



## **92: Thirty-Five Miles per Hour by cali-chan**

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**Summary:** "There's an 11:30 train out of Union that gets me there just in time for dinner. Don't worry about me, okay? I've got something I gotta work on, and I'll take a book with me or something. I'll keep myself entertained somehow. You just wait for me at South Station 'round 7:30, all right?" PG-13, romance/fluff, post-S2, Mike/Eleven.

## 92: Thirty-Five Miles per Hour

**Thirty-Five Miles per Hour.** PG-13, romance/fluff, post-S2, Mike/Eleven.

*"There's an 11:30 train out of Union that gets me there just in time for dinner. Don't worry about me, okay? I've got something I gotta work on, and I'll take a book with me or something. I'll keep myself entertained somehow. You just wait for me at South Station 'round 7:30, all right?"*

You might need insulin to get you through all this schmoopery.

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[ February 18th, 1995 ]

It was always annoying to be woken up at 6 am by the phone ringing straight in his ear, but for Mike it was even more of a bother than usual that day because the person on the other end of the line turned out to be an American Airlines customer service representative who let him know that the flight he was supposed to be taking in, oh, four hours or so had been cancelled due to an incoming snowstorm. Meaning, even if it was too goddamn early, he had to get out of bed anyway, because now he had to find an alternative way of getting to Boston that very day.

He had a date he couldn't miss.

"You don't have to do that," his girlfriend begged him when he called her to let her know of his change of plans. She was better at... well, mornings... than he was, so she didn't mind being woken up a little earlier than usual on a Saturday. "I'd rather you just stay down there. You can come up next weekend when you don't have to fight a giant snowstorm to get here."

"Nope, I promised you I'd be there for your birthday, and I will be there," he retorted, holding the phone against his ear with his shoulder as he picked his jacket up off the floor where it had slid off

the hanger.

He heard El huff in response. "Mike, don't be silly," she said, and he imagined she was shaking her head on the other end of the line. "I'm not holding you to that. I'm a grown-up; I don't need my birthday to be some special occasion every year. Don't go through all this trouble for me."

"I'm not going through all this trouble for you," he retorted as he threw some more winter clothes into his travel bag. "I'm going through all this trouble for me, because I miss you like crazy, and if I have to go another full week without seeing you, I'm going to go insane."

She was silent for a moment, and he figured his words had struck a nerve. He knew that he wasn't the only one feeling the strain of their separation; she had told him over and over how much she missed him during their nightly phone calls, and he could tell how much she was looking forward to his return to Boston, even if it was just for two days. Being apart was taking a toll on both of them.

As they both started what was the final stretch of their graduate studies, Mike got an incredible opportunity to complement the data for his research project with additional experimental work facilitated (and funded!) by a company widely regarded as a leader in the industry. It was a once-in-a-lifetime shot that could possibly lead to employment opportunities once his degree was finished, and his supervisor enthusiastically encouraged him to take the chance.

The only problem? The headquarters for the company was located in Washington, D.C., and he would have to remain in-situ for at least two months.

El, of course, had been nothing but supportive. She understood how important a chance this was for him, and she wanted him to take it. And even though she would have to remain in Boston because she was working on her own graduate studies, she was optimistic about their ability to weather a brief separation.

"After all, it's just two months," she had said. "We've been through worse before. We can manage being apart for two months," she had

said.

Yeah, easier said than done.

He'd been down at the capital since the semester started in January, and he was thoroughly enjoying the work *and* the work environment, but it was still tough to not be able to go home to the woman he loved every night. Sure, they talked on the phone every day, but it wasn't the same. That's why— well, one among many reasons— he'd been so eager to go back home this weekend. He was determined to get there one way or the other, even if this winter storm had thrown a wrench in his initial plans.

"I just don't want to inconvenience you," El's voice finally came through the line. She sounded a little more hesitant than usual, and it made him pause halfway through closing up the zipper on his bag.

He sat down on his bed with a sigh. "You could never inconvenience me, El," he assured her earnestly. "I *want* to be with you this weekend, okay? And besides, the storm isn't as bad as they're making it out to be." Yes, all flights out of Arlington were canceled, but the trains were still running, and if he made it out of town before they stopped *those* as well, he might still make it to Boston in time.

"I already called Amtrak," he let her know as he resumed his last-minute packing. "There's an 11:30 train out of Union that gets me there just in time for dinner. Don't worry about me, okay? I've got something I gotta work on, and I'll take a book with me or something. I'll keep myself entertained somehow. You just wait for me at South Station 'round 7:30, all right?"

"Okay," she conceded, although she still sounded a little unsure. "Just be careful. You'll call me if anything changes?"

"Of course," he confirmed. "Right. I gotta go buy my ticket now. I'll see you this evening, okay? I can't wait. Love you." She returned the sentiment over the phone's speaker and then Mike ended the call, bundling himself up in his jacket quickly on his way to the door. Buses were probably running on a reduced schedule, so he wasn't sure if he'd be able to catch one at the nearest stop anytime soon. He might have to come back to his dormitory and call a taxi.

He made it to Union Station eventually, and was able to purchase a ticket— in coach, too, which was great, because the thought had crossed his mind that he might have to get a seat in business class, which was more money than he'd been hoping to pay given that he'd already shelled out \$150 for a flight he was never going to take. Lucky for him, not many people were crazy enough to risk intercity travel during a snowstorm, so plenty of seats were available in coach.

He still had to wait an hour or so to catch his train, but he didn't mind; he had an important project he had to finish. He pulled a binder out of his bag and got to writing, going over previous drafts over and over, adding sentences in and striking words out and starting over from scratch about four times in the period he was waiting until boarding. He needed to get this right.

It was a little more difficult to write while on the train, partly because of the movement of the train car and partly because one of the few people on the car with him— some dude who looked like he was in his early 30s— kept playing the same album over and over on his Discman at a volume so loud that Mike could hear it even three rows back. (If he had to hear "Baby, I love your way" one more time in his life, that would be one time too many.)

Taking the draft he was least unsatisfied with out of the binder and folding it inside one of the pockets of his jacket, he decided he really needed to catch some z's. There would be no point to any of this if he got to see his girlfriend for the first time in a month, only to conk out as soon as he came within arms' length. So he napped intermittently for the first couple of hours of the trip, only jolting awake whenever the train made a stop at a station. It felt like time moved faster if he slept through it, after all.

Because he was in and out of sleep, it wasn't until their stop in Trenton that he noticed something was off. Yes, there was always a waiting period at every station so passengers could get on and off the train, but it seemed to be taking longer than usual over the last few stops. Probably due to the storm, he figured, but it meant they would arrive in Boston later than expected. Not by much, but ten minutes here, fifteen minutes there— it all added up.

He tried to read for a while like he'd told El he would— the latest

*Wheel of Time* had come out before the holidays, and it seemed like 700 pages should be enough to keep him distracted during an 8-hour train ride, but he kept getting distracted by the anxious churning in his stomach. Even the landscape around him couldn't keep his attention for long, as it usually did during long trips, because at the moment the landscape around him was nothing but snow, snow, and more snow. Every few pages he would find himself putting the book aside with a sigh, pulling the piece of paper out of his pocket and reading it over and over again.

Most of the passengers in his train car actually got off on New York City, and a few stragglers made it as far as New Haven. There were only two other people in the car when they stopped in New London, to more announcements over the speaker system that all trains on the Northeast Corridor were currently experiencing delays, that their train in particular would be stopped there for longer than expected, and to please be patient as they did everything that was necessary to ensure they arrived at their destination safely and as soon as possible. *Thank you for understanding, and for choosing Amtrak for your travels.*

He looked up from *Lord of Chaos* when one of his fellow passengers, this time a dark-skinned lady in her 50s or early 60s, got up to close the front door of the train car, which had remained open and was letting the cold wind of the storm in. Snapped out of his reading by the sound of the door closing, he took a look at his wristwatch and realized they'd already been in New London for over 20 minutes. They already carried over a one-hour delay even before this stop. He had to let Eleven know he was going to be late.

He marked his page and picked up his bag, chiming "Sorry! You can close it again if you want" to the old lady as he opened the door and walked out of the train car. He took a moment to ask a train employee where the nearest phone booth was, and whether they would announce over the station's PA system when his train was about to leave.

Fortunately for him, the New London train station was not very large, and there was a payphone right on the boarding platform. Unfortunately for him, the platform was open to the air, which meant that simple things like counting change and pushing the buttons on the phone were twice as difficult, as he had to do them while wearing

gloves.

Eventually he got the number dialed correctly, and he put the (*cold!*) phone to his ear, muttering "pick up pick up pick up" under his breath as he waited for Eleven to take the call. No such luck. He checked his watch— it was already past 6:30 pm. She was probably already on her way to South Station.

"Goddammit!" he exclaimed as he slammed the phone down against its base. Things had started off badly that morning, and they'd only gotten worse. Now not only was he going to be late, but also they'd miss their dinner reservation, and on top of everything, he was going to make Eleven wait for him for over an hour without being able to warn her.

He ran a frustrated hand through his hair, leaning against the phone box in resignation. What a mess. He pulled the folded sheet of paper out of his pocket and stared at it despondently, wondering how a day that was supposed to be so special for him—for *them*—ended up like this. Stupid goddamn storm.

And then, as if the storm itself was offended by that thought, the wind picked up and wrenched the paper right out of his hand, sending it flying over the train tracks until it disappeared in the vast, desolate whiteness of the snowy horizon.

He cursed so loudly that the person nearest to him—the young Amtrak employee who'd answered his question about the payphone—was visibly startled.

Mike crouched down beside the phone with a sigh, running a hand over his face. He tried everything: deep breaths, counting to ten, thinking of the happy moments— everything people were told to do to keep from exploding. That didn't do much for his feeling of despondency, though, which wasn't going away anytime soon. Not only was he going to get *barely* any time with his girlfriend, but all the plans he'd had for the night, everything he'd been arranging and looking forward to for so long, were now ruined. Because, of course, nothing could ever go his way.

He stood up with a groan and tried calling home again. No luck. So

he figured he'd use the last of his change to get a soda or something. He hadn't eaten anything since breakfast, and hunger was not helping his mood.

He boarded the train again ten minutes later, still hearing nothing but the same "apologies for the inconvenience" messages over the PA system. They'd been stopped for nearly 40 minutes. With nothing else to do but wait, he pulled out his book again and continued reading.

7:30 pm came and went. So did 8:30. In fact, they remained stopped in New London for nearly *three hours*.

Mike almost sobbed when the train started running again, but there were still at least two hours to go on a best-case scenario. He could only hope that El had gone home for the night. He'd be the worst boyfriend in existence if she had to wait four hours for him in a train station in the middle of the night, not to mention in the middle of a snowstorm.

Thankfully, there were no more extended stops along the way. It got too dark to read comfortably, so Mike just slept. Before he knew it, he was woken up by the speakers announcing they had reached the northeastern terminus and encouraging all passengers to exit the train.

Mike grabbed his stuff quickly and was the first person off the train car, no matter how much his legs were screaming at him with every step he took. He made his way from the platform to the main building at a quick pace, not wanting to waste any more time. But when he pushed past the doors and into the terminal, his feet halted on their own—as did his heart.

Because there she was, sitting by herself on the set of chairs closest to where he stood, and boy was she a sight for sore eyes.

She was asleep, which was not unusual for a busy transport terminal at this hour of the night, although given the storm, the place was emptier than usual. There were still a few people around, though, so he wasn't worried; she was sitting near the info booth, which was still manned even at this hour, and he could see a uniformed police officer nearby keeping watch around the terminal.

She was hugging a large canvas bag to herself, her head leaning forward so she could use it as a pillow. He was sure the position couldn't be comfortable for her, but she was still there waiting for him.

He made his way in her direction until he could crouch in front of her, pausing for a second to take in her beautiful features before reaching out to touch one of her arms, intending to pull her steadily out of sleep with a light touch. "El?" She stirred. "Hey. I'm here."

She opened her eyes but only blinked sleepily at him for the first few seconds. He smiled at her, and that's when it seemed to hit her that he was really there, in front of her. "Mike!" she exclaimed in a raspy voice, dropping the bag she was holding on the empty seat next to her so she could throw her arms tightly around him.

He held her just as tightly, burying his face against the hair that fell over her shoulder, taking in the scent of her, the feeling of having her in his arms again after a month of nothing but the tinny sound of her voice through the phone line. He'd missed this so much.

"I was worried," she said in his ear, probably referring to the delay and the storm.

"We spent three hours stuck in Connecticut," he explained. "I tried to call you and let you know, but I think you were already out of the apartment by that point." He pulled back, only letting go of her so he could stand up— his knees were starting to hurt. She got to her feet along with him. "Sorry you had to wait for me for four hours," he mumbled, leaning his forehead against hers.

"Sorry you had to spend twelve hours on a train for me," she retorted with a humorless chuckle, cradling his face delicately in her hands like she still couldn't believe that he was there. Her eyes were teary.

He shook his head, but instead of offering a rebuttal, he gave in to the one desire he'd carried with him since his train arrived at South Station: he leaned in and kissed her, not even caring that there were people around probably watching their embrace out of curiosity or boredom.

Her hands found purchase against his back, just below his nape, grabbing onto the collar of his jacket for leverage to lift herself to the tips of her toes. She pressed her entire body against his from her chest to her knees, kissing him back with breathless enthusiasm, which he returned. It had been too long since he'd last tasted her lips. For the entirety of the last month he'd felt like a man dying of thirst, and she was his oasis in the desert.

"I missed you," he whispered as they pulled back for air, but only just slightly, so he was still within kissing distance of her lips—which he proceeded to take advantage of by leaning in for pecks every few seconds.

"I missed you so much," she whispered back at him, closing her eyes as she nuzzled her nose against his. They stayed like that for a heartbeat, just basking in each other's presence after being apart for so long. Then El pulled back and smiled at him. "Oh, wait, I forgot. Are you hungry?" She turned to grab her bag.

Hungry was an understatement. Now that he'd finally arrived and had her by his side, his brain could finally focus on the fact that the last bit of food (if you could call it that) he'd had was a can of Coke and a small bag of nacho-cheese Bugles back in New London. "Yeah, actually," he admitted. "Is there like a working vending machine around? I still have some change left over..."

"No, I figured you'd be hungry," El said as she pulled out a bundle wrapped in aluminum foil out of her bag and handed it to him, "so I brought you something." She handed him the foil-wrapped package. Curious, he peeked inside and found what looked like a Cuban sandwich. "You can eat it here before we have to figure out how to get back home..." She trailed off when she noticed the way he was staring at her. "What?"

Mike felt his stomach clench painfully. Not only had she waited for him for *four hours* at a train station on her own, but she'd also realized that he'd be hungry when he arrived so she'd made sure to bring him some food. It was nothing huge, but she was thoughtful enough to think that far. Who else cared that much about him as to do that? No one did. No one was as good to him as she was. No one loved him like she did.

And the reason she'd even had to think of bringing him food was that *she didn't know*. She didn't know he'd made dinner reservations, she didn't know about everything he had prepared for this night. *Of course* she had no idea; it was supposed to be a surprise.

"Oh, God," he croaked out through the knot that had formed in his throat. He saw her look concerned for a moment, which only made the clamp in his gut worse, and he tried to swallow the words down because everything had gone wrong and she deserved better than to have this happen in a train station in the middle of a winter storm, but he loved her so much, *so much* that the magnitude of his feelings seemed unfathomable, and so he blurted out: "Marry me."

And to his absolute horror, her immediate response was to *roll her eyes*.

"Don't be silly, Mike," she said with an amused smile, shaking her head and mock-slapping him on the chest. "It's just a sandwich."

"No, no, that wasn't—" Shaking himself out of his shock, and realizing she thought he was just joking, he dropped the still-wrapped sandwich on top of El's bag on the chair and took her hands in his, drawing her attention up to his face. "I'm not—I really meant that, El," he said, emphasizing with a nod of his head that he was being absolutely, utterly sincere. "Will you marry me? I'm really... I'm really asking."

El's smile started to drop and her eyes widened as she realized what was happening. "What...?"

"I had this whole plan," he continued speaking with a chuckle that was part nerves and part self-deprecation. "We were going to have dinner at your favorite restaurant, and then after we would walk to the BU Bridge, and I would ask you there, overlooking the city, exactly at midnight." His gaze fell to his feet in defeat. "But of course I wasn't counting on a freaking snowstorm descending on us this exact weekend, and now everything's ruined..."

"Yes," El agreed with a chuckle of her own.

"I know," he bemoaned, frustrated. "I even had a whole speech ready,

I'd spent *weeks* figuring out what I was going to say, getting it as perfect as I possibly could even though there's no way I can ever put into words how important you are to me, but then a fucking gust of wind blew it right out of my hand and I thought 'Okay, that's it. There's no way I can do it today,'" he finished, with a sharp shake of his head.

Then he sighed, disheartened. "I wanted to do this on a day that we—that is *special* to us, you know, and if I didn't do it today I was going to have to wait until, I don't know, November, I guess," he muttered, then took a deep breath, gathering up his courage. "But I don't think I can hold back for that long, El, I'm just—"

"No, Mike," she interrupted his tirade by grabbing his face with both her hands and turning him so he could look her straight in the eye. "Yes," she repeated emphatically, a bright smile back on her face. "That's my answer."

"Wait, what...?" It was Mike's turn to need a second to process the meaning of her words. As soon as it clicked, his breath caught. "Does that mean... Is that yes as in—as in yes, you'll marry me?" he asked, feeling like his heart was going to beat out of his chest.

"Of course I'll marry you, dummy," she reiterated, tears starting to pour from her eyes, framing her beautiful smile. Happy tears. Even after this disaster of a day, he'd managed to make her happy somehow. He wanted to make her happy every single day of their lives. "I love you so much," she said between sniffles and giggles.

"I love you," he responded in kind, voice trembling. He was trying really hard not to cry himself, so he pre-empted it by leaning in to kiss her, conveying every single emotion he was feeling through that gesture instead, muffling both her laughter and his own as he got lost in the softness of her lips, already salty from the tears.

The joy bubbled out of him again when she broke for air, and without really thinking about it he lifted her up and spun her as far as he could— sandwich and bag both got knocked down when the heel of her boot accidentally hit one of the chairs— their combined mirth echoing around them in the high-ceilinged building. As soon as her feet touched the ground, he was kissing her again.

"I have a ring for you, I swear," he pointed out as they pulled back once again. "It's just at the apartment."

She shook her head, taking a moment to wipe the last of her tears. "It doesn't matter," she assured him earnestly.

"No, it does matter— I've had it for almost a year; I am definitely going to give it to you when we get back home," he promised her, already thinking ahead to the moment when they could finally be alone and celebrate properly.

"Where did you even hide a ring for a *year* in our apartment?" El asked, unable to curb her curiosity. Mike didn't blame her: he hardly ever held secrets from her, and the few times he did, he was terrible at actually *keeping* them secret. It was a minor miracle that he managed to keep this one to himself for so long.

"Gun safe," he revealed with a shrug. "I figured you wouldn't look there, and if you did, you might think it was a replacement part for the gun or something."

He had a point, given that it had been a year and she'd been none the wiser, but she still scoffed. "I'm the daughter of a cop; I'm pretty sure I can tell the difference between a gun part and an engagement ring," she declared in an indignant tone, but she was still grinning, so Mike knew she wasn't *really* offended.

"You're right, you're right," he conceded with a snort. "I just couldn't think of anywhere else and I was getting desperate." He shook his head in amusement. "You're too smart for me. See? That's why it's a good thing I'm marrying you," he concluded, playfully kissing the tip of her button nose.

At his words she looked up at him and bit her lip to contain her smile, almost like she still couldn't believe what just happened, like she didn't want to jinx it. "We're getting married," she whispered in abject wonder, the tone of a cherished secret that was simply too good to say out loud.

"Yeah, we are," he nodded with a grin of his own, and she pulled his face down for another kiss. He returned it eagerly, certain that this

giddiness would fill his chest for days and days on end. He loved her so much. He'd always loved her, he would *always* love her, and now she was going to be his wife.

His wife. How did he get so lucky?

"God, I wish we could be home right now," he murmured as they separated just barely, his lips still mere inches away from hers, like pulling back any further was asking too much of them.

"Me too," she agreed in an equally low tone; then she sighed, disappointed. "That might take a while, though. MBTA said the T would only run until midnight."

"It's past midnight?" Mike snuck a glance at his wristwatch to see that, indeed, it was almost 12:30 am.

"Yes. So at least one part of your 'grand plan' went right," she replied with a teasing smile before stretching to press a kiss against his cheek.

Mike groaned. "Do me a favor? When Mom and Nancy ask you how I proposed, just go with the alternative scenario where there was no storm, and I actually made it here on time," he pleaded. "I will never live it down if they find out I just blurted it out like this."

She laughed loudly. "No way!" she said, shaking her head emphatically. "There's no need for that. This was *super* romantic," she assured him as she played with the zipper on his jacket, but the cheeky grin remained in place.

"Yeah, right," he retorted with a snort. "Even the part where we have to spend the entire night at a train station because we're snowed in?" He looked around at the travel info boards to see if he could find an alternative way for them to get home. Usually from this area they would just take the subway, but that option was out, and he knew that the snow/night bus route that would drop them closest to their place still had them walking several blocks to get there. Taxis weren't likely to be running during the storm either.

He racked his brain to try and come up with a solution but was

coming up blank. When he turned back to her he saw that she was worried, too. He smiled at her, trying to reassure her. "Happy birthday, by the way," he added, dropping a kiss on her forehead.

"Hey." She tugged at his jacket to keep his attention from wandering away. He dutifully waited for her to speak as she gave him a pointed look. "It's a *very* happy birthday, okay? I don't care where we are or what the original plan was, I'm *so happy* right now. *You* make me happy," she punctuated the last sentence with a tap of her finger against his chest, and he understood that she wasn't worried about how they'd get home; she was worried that *he* was disappointed in himself.

He was still a little frustrated that things just couldn't go his way, but it would pass—she was right: all that mattered was that he'd asked her, and she'd said yes, and now they had the rest of their lives to look forward to. "Good," she replied at his acquiescence. "Now come on, you really have to eat something."

"Um, excuse me?" they heard as they were about to sit down to eat, and they turned to see the lady at the info booth was speaking to them. "If you guys are stuck here, Officer Ramirez's shift ends at 1," she told them with a smile, pointing to the police officer Mike had seen standing nearby earlier. "I'm sure he could give you a ride home, if you don't have any other options."

"Oh, that would be great!" El exclaimed, smiling back at the woman. She seemed nice and must have noticed that they were just standing around, unlike the few remaining travelers around them who would get off a newly arrived train and make their way straight outside. "We'll do that, thanks."

"It's not a problem, dear," the lady replied. "And congratulations, by the way. You two make a lovely couple," she added. Mike wasn't sure exactly what she was congratulating them *for*—the engagement or El's birthday—but they both responded with gratitude either way.

And so the *special* day Mike had planned so meticulously ended with a ride home on the back of a police cruiser—which, honestly, was rather comforting considering how many life-altering days in their relationship, both individually and together, had ended the same

way.

They went to sleep as soon as they got back to their apartment, tired from the ordeal of the day, but they spent most of the next morning properly celebrating their engagement, only coming out of bed to go have breakfast once local media confirmed that the storm had abated around dawn.

On the way back from breakfast, they stopped by the BU Bridge and, with the city as a backdrop, Mike asked her properly this time, ring and all. By 2 pm, all land transportation had gone back to its regular schedule, and they made their way back to South Station for the second time in less than 24 hours so that Mike could catch his train back. Going away was never easy, especially since they'd only had a few hours together, but at least they wouldn't be apart for that long this time 'round, as El was planning on visiting D.C. the first weekend in March.

"Call me when you get there, okay?" she requested as she stood on the platform, looking up at him as he stood at the open door to his train car, waiting for last call. "And if there are any delays on the way, let me know, too. I'll be waiting by the phone."

"Okay," he agreed, seeing no point in telling her not to wait for his call because he knew she would, anyway. He leaned in to kiss her goodbye. "I love you."

"I love you, too," she said, and that's when the announcement came over the PA system warning people to step away from the doors because they were about to close. "I'll see you soon," she promised.

The door slid closed between them and she smiled at him through the glass pane. He smiled in return and waved. Then the train started moving, and he kept his gaze fixed on his fiancée until they left the station and he couldn't see her anymore.

As he walked to his seat, he found himself already counting the days until they were together again.

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**Notes:** In case anyone is keeping track, this is the third piece I've written in a row that starts with Mike waking up in the morning. I don't know why my brain is doing that, but there you go. Yay trivia.

This story was directly inspired by Makoto Shinkai's beautiful animated movie *5 centimeters per second* (well, the first part of it, at least; not the actual ending. I wouldn't do that to you guys). Do watch it if you can get a hold of it, it's lovely and heartbreakingly beautiful. In other news, you know you're too obsessed with a fandom/pairing when you're at the theater watching a completely unrelated film and the first thought that goes through your mind is "man, this plot is so Mike/Eleven!" xD

TONS of notes on this one! (I guess the universe was out of balance after last time lol):

Ronald Reagan Washington National in Arlington is the primary airport serving the Washington, D.C. area. American Airlines does fly non-stop between the two cities. Amtrak also does connect both cities via their Northeast Corridor; a train ride between the two locations usually takes about 8 hours in good weather, depending on the type of train and the time of day. Union Station and South Station are the main train stations for the Washington, D.C. and Boston metro areas respectively, both servicing Amtrak as well as other types of transportation. The Massachusetts Bay Transport Authority (MBTA) is the agency in charge of operating public transportation in the Greater Boston area, including the subway (aka "the T").

Sony's Discman was the first portable CD player, which was first released in 1984, but music CDs didn't really overtake sales of cassette tapes until around 1992, so the Discman only really became a staple of pop culture in the 90s. "Baby, I Love Your Way" is a song originally recorded by Peter Frampton, but covered in 1994 by reggae-fusion band Big Mountain. It came in at 21 on the Billboard Hot 100 list that year and I'm sure it's the version most of y'all would recognize. *The Wheel of Time* is a high-fantasy book series by Robert Jordan; I've never read it, but it sounds like the kind of thing Mike would like. *Lord of Chaos* is the sixth book in the series. The Boston University (BU) Bridge crosses the Charles river and connects Boston

with Cambridge.

There *was* a Cat-2 nor'easter in the US in February 1995, but it was earlier in the month, so just assume this storm is sort of the remnant of that. Also, I googled all the train stations mentioned here to make sure they more-or-less looked the way I described them, although some artistic license was taken on the little details.

I tend to use February 19th as Eleven's birthday because that's Millie's; it did fall on a Sunday in 1995. 35 mph is the (slightly rounded-down) average speed of a train covering the 436 (...ish) miles between Washington, D.C. and Boston in 12 hours.